Question for written answer E-004710/2016
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 130
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Subject: VP/HR - Sentencing of Kazakh journalist Guzyal Baidalinova

On 23 May 2016 Kazakh journalist Guzyal Baidalinova (employed by news website Nakanune.kz) was sentenced to 18 months in jail on libel charges at the Almaty district court. She was found guilty of publishing false information about Kazkommertsbank. The sentence coincided with widespread social unrest and protests, as well as the arrests of hundreds of activists who have made their presence felt in Kazakhstan over the last 25 years.

The case of Ms Baidalinova was referred to in Parliament’s resolution of March 2016 on freedom of expression in Kazakhstan, which called, inter alia, for her release. In addition, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, in her statement of September 2015, mentioned this as one of a number of court cases that clearly constitute excessive restrictions on freedom of the media and freedom of expression.

Are the Vice-President / High Representative and the European External Action Service (EEAS) aware of the sentencing and arrests, and are they discussing them with the Kazakh authorities?

In view of Kazakhstan’s international human rights obligations, including those set out in the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU, which is still to be ratified, is the issue of the deteriorating state of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly being raised in all relevant bilateral meetings with the Kazakh authorities?